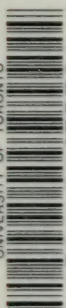


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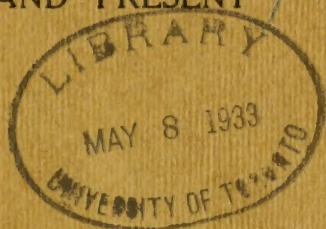




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# THE LAY OF KOSSOVO

( HISTORY AND POETRY  
ON  
SERBIA'S PAST AND PRESENT )



For the Anniversary of the  
Kossovo Day Celebration in Great Britain  
on the 28th June (15th June O.S.) 1916

Published by  
THE KOSSOVO DAY COMMITTEE



# THE LAY OF KOSSOVO

SERBIA'S PAST AND PRESENT

(1389—1917)

BY

*F. W. Harvey, C. Oman, Sir Arthur Evans, T. R. Gjorgjevitch,  
Alice and Claude Askew, G. K. Chesterton*

AND

THREE

SERBIAN BALLADS

For the Anniversary of the Kossovo Day Celebration in Great  
Britain on the 28th of June, 1916, published by the  
Kossovo Day Committee

1917

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## PREFACE.

For the first time for centuries last year the Serbs were not able to celebrate their great national festival in freedom in their own country. Their British friends most graciously made it possible for them to observe Kossovo Day in Great Britain—a tribute, of course, to the heroism of the Serbs, but also a proof of the great interest of the British public in the Serbian people and of an increasing appreciation of their cause.

Under Dr. Elsie Inglis (as Chairman) and Dr. Seton Watson (as Hon. Secretary), a National Committee was formed, consisting of :—

The Lady Cowdray,  
Lady Grogan,  
Lady Paget,  
The Hon. Mrs. Haverfield,  
Dr. Dickinson Berry,  
Mrs. Kinnell,

Mrs. St. Clair Stobart,  
Mrs. Flinders Petrie,  
Mrs. Carrington Wilde,  
Mr. James Berry, F.R.C.S.,  
The Rev. Percy Dearmer, D.D.,  
The Rev. H. J. Fynes-Clinton,

Mr. F. C. Lindo.

Two Serbian members were added to this (Father Nicolas Velimirovic, Dr. M. Curcin).

All the members took a most active part in the work.

The memory of this celebration will remain and afford great satisfaction to the Serbs, and the late Committee think it worth while to commemorate the anniversary by publishing two excellent articles from Professor C. Oman and Professor Gjorgjevitch, which came too late to be used last year. To these are added, by kind permission of their authors and the editors of the papers in which they first appeared, three other articles which aroused much interest at the time ; while the translation of three Serbian ballads may help to complete a pamphlet which shall evoke in its entirety the Kossovo idea—the key to a right understanding of the history as well as of the poetry and civilisation of the Serbian people.

### KOSSOVO DAY.

FROM this sweet nest of peace and Summer blue—  
England in June—a sea-bird's nest indeed  
Guarded of waves, and hid by the sea-weed  
From envious hunter's eye, we send to you  
Our flying thoughts and prayers, our treasure too,  
Poor though it be to bandage wounds that bleed  
For country dear & beloved. There the seed  
Of homely loves and occupations grew  
To wither in the flame of Godless might  
Kindled by hands of treachery, yet reeking  
With blood of friends and neighbours. Serbia, thou  
Has thought us careless and far off; know now  
Thy name to us is sudden drums outspeaking  
And tortured trumpets crying in the night!

F. W. HARVEY.

(*"Westminster Gazette"* of the 28th June, 1916.)

1389. *On the 15th June, on the Day of St. Vitus—it was Tuesday—was a battle between Serbs and Ottomans. Amongst the Serbs were Despot Lazar, the King, and Vuk Brankovitch and Vlatko Vukovich, the Dukes. There was great slaughter, as much among the Turks as the Serbs, and few returned to their own country. Both Tsar Murat and the King of Serbia were killed ; and victory was not granted either to the Turks or the Serbs, so great was the carnage. And the battle took place on the Field of Kossovo.*

Old Ragusan Report. (Monumenta Spectantia Historiam Slavorum Meridionalium, XIV., 48.)

## AN OLD TREASON AGAINST CHRISTENDOM.

Who let the Turks into Europe—to be for more than five centuries the curse of Eastern Christendom? Historians have made many answers, and blamed many culprits. Some speak merely of the weakness of the Byzantine emperors who followed on the extinction of the great house of the Comneni in 1185. Others, descending a few years, place the responsibility on the piratical Western Crusaders of 1204, who shattered the Byzantine Empire so that all its pieces could never be patched together again; Athens and Achaia, Crete, Albania and the Cyclades being lopped away, the restored empire of the Palaeologi was never strong enough to discharge its proper function as warder of the Eastern gate of Europe against the oncoming Moslem. Yet another school pleads that the final ruin of the Christian East was due to the commercial greed of the Venetians and Genoese, who kept the Palaeologi in economic fetters by means of their chains of fortified factories and island strongholds, and mortally injured the Constantinopolitan empire by economic starvation, long ere its last day came.

There is some truth in each of these contentions. But yet another factor was operative, which worked more directly, and at the actual moment of the first Turkish invasions of Europe. All the forces that we have named above were at their evil work for a century or more before the day on which the Emir Soliman, the son of Orchan, seized Gallipoli, and planted the horse-tail standard for the first time on European soil. There was another enemy who stabbed the defenders of Eastern Christendom in the back, at the very moment when they were doing their best to fend off the new attack from the East. It is not too much to say that the most criminal of

all the political malefactors who were responsible for letting the Turk into the Balkans was a king of Hungary, the capable and ambitious Lewis the Great, who ruined Serbia when the duty of guarding the Eastern March had fallen to her charge.

For this fact must first be realised. By the fourteenth century the Byzantine empire was irretrievably decadent. Shrunken and wasted, shorn of many provinces, economically ruined by Venice and Genoa, ruled by a long line of shiftless and bankrupt Emperors, the Eastern Cæsarate had no fighting power left. When the Ottoman State had organised itself, and delivered its attack on Europe, it was not the Palaeologi who could be expected to defend Christendom. The barrier against aggression from Asia had to be made by the nation which lay behind the narrow coast-slip of Byzantine territory, and dominated the whole interior of the Balkan Peninsula.

That nation was the Serbian people. In 1354 it was on them that the responsibility fell, when the Turk had established himself on the Dardanelles. Now if the Ottoman attack had been delivered a few years earlier, it would have been worthily met. From 1331 to 1355 the greatest of Serbian monarchs was reigning, and had well nigh the whole Balkan Peninsula firmly in his grasp. Stephen Dushan had conquered all his neighbours : the kings of Bosnia and Bulgaria were his vassals : he had won not only Macedonia but Thessaly and Southern Albania. All was his from the Danube to Thermopylae ; he had opened his way to the Adriatic as well as to the Ægean. He had built up a State which might have faced any invader with confidence, including even the formidable Ottoman. Practically he had reconstituted the Eastern Empire, with a Serbian instead of a Byzantine nucleus, and from his new capital of Uscup, where he had assumed the imperial title of Tzar, he ruled the Balkan Peninsula far more firmly than any of his Byzantine predecessors had done for three centuries back.

In 1355, to the eternal misfortune of Eastern Europe, Stephen Dushan died, a few months after the Ottoman invasion began, leaving a son under age as the heir to his great empire. Just after the Turks got their first firm foothold

in Europe, they found a minor on the Serbian throne, and all the vassal princes who had served the formidable Tzar disowning their allegiance to his heir. Yet even so the game was not yet lost : it took Sultan Murad several years to secure his foothold in Europe, and to conquer the Byzantine possessions in Thrace. The Serbians might have held him back, though they were no longer led by one great king but by several factious princes, if only they had been left alone to fight the battle which was not only in their own defence, but in the defence of all Christendom.

They were not permitted to do so ; when the Tzar Stephen died in 1355, his successor as the dominating personality in Eastern Europe was Lewis the Great, King of Hungary from 1342 to 1382, a great fighting man with an insatiable appetite for annexation. When Stephen was dead, and the boy Urosh, surrounded by over-powerful and ambitious vassal princes, reigned in his stead, Hungary's opportunity had come. From 1359 onward King Lewis kept up a constant aggression against his Serbian neighbours, and that no less after than before they had begun to engage in the inevitable struggle with the oncoming Turk. In 1359 he fell upon and conquered Northern Bosnia and endeavoured to set a nominee of his own on the Serbian throne ; a few years later, in 1365, he crossed the Danube, and seized Belgrade—the old Serbian capital—and the surrounding district. This blow was a particularly cruel one, for the Serbians were at the moment smarting under the first defeats which they had received from the Turks. It was in 1363 that considerable Serbian forces, advancing to recover Adrianople, had been cut to pieces on the Maritza, not far from that city, at the first battle of Chernomen. A rally was still possible, if the nation had been left to settle its own destiny. But this was not to be : in the hour of defeat Hungary fell upon its rear, and seized Belgrade.

And this was but the first of a long series of aggressions : King Lewis was always hammering at the back of the Serbians while they were engaged with the Turks in front. He wished to dominate the Balkan Peninsula. Presently he passed into Bulgaria, and made Widdin and the neighbouring district a Hungarian Banat (1365-1369).

Now if Lewis had made the conquest of the Balkan lands his main life's work, he might conceivably have built up an empire as broad and strong as that which a few years before had obeyed Tzar Stephen Dushan, for Hungary was even a stronger basis on which to build than Serbia. But the Balkan wars were, most unhappily, only a side issue to him. He had a Western policy, and was busy in the affairs of the Italian Peninsula. In especial he was a great enemy of Venice, from whom he desired to wrest the Dalmatian sea coast, the natural outlet of Hungary to the sea. He made his first raid upon it in 1356, but did not finally succeed in tearing the whole long province from the Venetian Republic till 1381. Moreover he had also an ambitious Polish policy, which ultimately ended in his succeeding to the crown of Casimir IV. of Poland at the latter's death, in 1370.

A King with so many irons in the fire was the worst possible neighbour for the Balkan Peninsula, when the Turks were beginning their first assault upon its southern slopes. He was interested in it enough to induce him to strike hard at the unfortunate Serbians, and to break their power by a long series of blows. But he was *not* sufficiently interested by his southern conquests to make him devote himself to the idea of building up a great Balkan Empire. If he had been, there might have arisen a power strong enough to face and turn back every Turkish attack. But while Lewis was busy with Italy and Poland, the Asiatic enemy slipped in, and gradually won for himself a foothold in Macedonia and Thrace, from which the distressed Serbians could never expel him. Lewis continued his Balkan enterprises at the most unhappily chosen times. In 1369 the Bulgarians, with Serbian and Wallachian aid, drove the Hungarians out of Widdin. In the next year Lewis came down into the Balkans with a larger army than ever before, and flooding across north-eastern Serbia and western Bulgaria recovered Widdin and restored his previous domination on the Danube. The Bulgarians in despair actually offered homage to the Turk, in order to save themselves from the Western invader, who was conducting his invasion under the disguise of a Crusade, and forcibly rebaptising the "orthodox" peasantry into the Latin church. It was in 1370 that the unhappy cry "Better be

vassal to the Moslem than be damned for joining the heretical Roman Church " was first heard in Europe. Alas ! it was to be echoed in later years, not only in Bulgaria, but in Serbia and in Constantinople. It was a Greek admiral who cried in the last agony of the Byzantine Empire " that he would rather see the turban of the Turk predominate in the Holy City than the Red Hat of the Cardinal."

It was while King Lewis's unhappy crusade seemed the main fact in Balkan politics that the second great disaster fell on Serbia. The young King Urosh was on his death bed—his rival for the crown, the Macedonian Despot Vukachin, made an attempt to take the Turks in flank while they were engaged in Bulgarian campaigning, and came to an unhappy end in the second battle of the Maritza in 1371, with many Serbian princes more. Next year the Sultan overran all Macedonia, and Serbian power south of the Balkans ceased. No hope came from the North because of the Hungarian peril.

Even when Lewis the Great died in 1382 he did not leave behind him as a legacy a united Kingdom of Poland and Hungary, though he had been at such pains to join them. That would have been a State strong enough to hold for ever against the Turks the line of the Danube, if not that of the Balkans. But at his death Hungary and Poland fell apart—Hungary went to his daughter Mary and her husband Sigismund of Luxembourg, afterwards Emperor, all of whose interests lay in the West ; Poland, which made Lewis' other daughter, Hedwiga, its queen, became united, by her marriage with Jagellon of Lithuania, to lands east and north, and involved herself in a long struggle with Moscow for the domination of all the Russians. Therefore Lewis' conquests in the Balkans were all wasted energy, since his successors had their interests elsewhere. He merely helped the Turk to break up the Slav state which might have served as the first outpost of Christendom, after the Byzantine emperors had proved utterly unable to discharge that function.

It was the Turks who made an end of the Serbian power, despite the strenuous efforts of the last independent King of Serbia, Lazarus, whose reign of eighteen years (1371-1389)

was one constant crisis of peril. But it was Lewis of Hungary who had made the task of Lazarus impossible. It was the repeated Hungarian invasions from the north which rendered the defence of the southern Serbian lands impossible. Lazarus had to look on helplessly while Macedonia was overrun by the Ottomans, because his own concern—his personal dominions lay along the Danube—was more with the lands of the north-west on which the Hungarian was encroaching.

By the time that Lewis was dead (1382) in the eleventh year of the troublous reign of Lazarus, all the Christian lands south of the Balkan range were irretrievably lost. It is true that Sigismund of Luxembourg, the son-in-law and successor of Lewis, was not such a formidable enemy to Serbia as the great Lewis, but he was equally blind to the necessity of holding back the Ottoman from Eastern Christendom till the danger became his own, after Serbia had been wrecked at Kossovo, and the wave of Ottoman invasion at last washed up to the Danube. In 1389 he was at peace with Lazarus, but he was not at his side in arms against the Turk, as any Hungarian King who saw the danger of the coming storm should have been. On hearing of the unhappy day of Kossovo his first act was to make his private profit out of the disaster to Christendom. His armies at once crossed the Danube and seized Belgrade and the surrounding district along the Danube, which his father-in-law had already once before conquered in 1365. Hungary profited by Serbia's ruin. It was a true instance of Nemesis that for three hundred years Hungary was to pay for her treachery to Christendom in the fourteenth century: first by facing a hundred and thirty years of Turkish invasions, then by enduring a Turkish conquest, after Mohacs (1526)—the Hungarian equivalent for Kossovo—and finally by seeing Buda the seat of a Turkish Pasha for a hundred and seventy years more.

C. OMAN.

## THE BATTLE OF KOSSOVO.

*June 15th, O.S. 1389.*

### I.

The rise of the Serbian nation in the Middle Ages, which began under the Serbian Grand Zhupan, Stephen Nemanya (1169-1196), and continued under his heirs, reached its zenith under the Emperor Stephen Dushan (1331-1355). During the period that elapsed between the reigns of Nemanya and Dushan, Serbia, from being a vassal of Byzantium, first became an independent county, then a kingdom (1217), and finally an Empire (1346). The Serbian Church, before that time under the Archbishopric of Ochrida, became independent (1220), and subsequently rose to the rank of a patriarchate (1346). In Dushan's reign the frontiers of Serbia extended from the Save and the Danube to the Gulf of Corinth, and from the Adriatic as far as Adrianople. Her national agricultural wealth, her mines, her trade with foreign countries near and far, resulted in complete prosperity; literature, architecture, and the other arts being almost unequalled by any other European countries at that time. Legislation attained its climax in Dushan's Law Book, a masterpiece of mediæval jurisprudence. Serbia was bidding fair to become the leading State in the Near East.

Dushan was at his death succeeded by his nineteen-year-old son Urosh as Emperor of Serbia (1355-1371), "a youth of great parts, quiet and gracious, but without experience," as contemporary Serbian chroniclers describe him. Throughout the vast extent of the Empire it was soon apparent that the strong hand of Dushan was no longer at the helm. The feudal barons made themselves masters of provinces, ruled independently and fought among themselves. Thus, while Serbia under Urosh was becoming weakened by internal dissensions, events were developing in the East which were to exercise a decisive influence not only upon the fate of Serbia, but upon the whole civilized world—the rise and advance of the Turks into Europe.

After they had wrested Gallipoli from the Greeks (1354), they began to attack Byzantium and the outlying Serbian provinces, and in 1359 the renowned Sultan Murat came to the throne, a wise and fearless ruler of the first order. He crossed to Europe in 1360, conquering Chorlu and Dimotika (1361), Zagora (1362), Philippople (1363), and Adrianople (1365) where he established his throne. Within five years Murat conquered Thrace from the Sea of Marmora to the Balkan Mountains and from the Black Sea to Rhodope, and transferred the Turkish centre of strength from Asia to Europe. Byzantium, convulsed by internecine strife, failed to resist the Turks from the very first ; indeed, the various Emperors and their rivals actually sought the support of the Turks and vied in outbidding one another in the concessions each demanded of the Turks. When the danger of their increasing power at last became apparent, the Emperor Jovan twice traversed Europe, beseeching the Christian princes for help against the Turks, but without success. Bulgaria, also divided by dissensions, was quickly penetrated, the conquest of Eastern Bulgaria, with its royal seat Trnovo, and Western Bulgaria with its capital of Vidin, presenting no difficulty.

The southern principalities of Serbia were the first to feel the Turkish danger. Vukashin, one of Dushan's vassal princes, in 1366 proclaimed himself King of the Serbians in Macedonia. His chief ally and supporter was the despot Ugljesha, who ruled over the neighbouring eastern Serbian counties on the Greek and Turkish frontiers and had his capital at Ser, Seres of to-day. Vukashin and Ugljesha decided to attack the Turks and expel them from Europe. They gathered a considerable army and went to meet the invaders, but the Turks took them by surprise at Chernomen (Chirmen) on the left banks of the River Maritza, and their armies were cut to pieces ; both Vukashin and Ugljesha perished, September 26th, 1371. Soon afterwards, on December 4th, the young Tzar Urosh died likewise.

The battle of Cernomen laid open the way to Serbia, and the Turks soon overran the whole of Macedonia. Of Dushan's vast Empire, only the district north of the Shar mountain and the Crna Gora of Uskub retained its freedom, ruled independently by the feudal lords of the Empire, most important of whom were Prince Lazar, of the Morava and Danube territories, whose court was in Krushevatz. Further westward ruled Prince Vuk Brankovitch and still further westward George Balshitch to the coastland and Montenegro of to-day. There was also the independent kingdom of Bosnia, which was at the time ruled by King

Tvrtko. In the hour of danger which threatened all Serbian lands alike, Lazar, the foremost in authority and linked to the House of Nemanya through his wife Militza, concluded an alliance with all the Serbian princes, in mutual defence against the Turks. He was the first to bear the brunt of their attack, and as long as it was possible, most wisely and heroically did he resist it.

The battle of Chernomen had not only cleared the way to Serbia for the Turks, but exposed Bulgaria also; Sofia fell in 1382, and the Bulgarian Tzar Shishman became a Turkish vassal. Thus the danger from the Turks threatened the Serbs not only from the south but also from the east. In 1386 the Turks wrested Nish from the Serbs; however in the important battle at Plotchnik (on the river Toplitza, between Prokuplje and Kurshumja), the Turks met with the first defeat since the invincible Sultan Murat embarked on his career of conquest in the Balkans. Though the blow was a hard one, it spurred the Turks on to make better preparations. So did Prince Lazar, too, and the alliance between him and the other Serbian princes was renewed and strengthened. The neighbouring States of Albania, Rumania and Hungary, who had, later on, to pay for their inactivity against the Turks, declined to take steps against the invaders. Hungary even prepared to attack Lazar in those fateful days. Meanwhile Sultan Murat launched his armies against the Serbs at Kossovo.

## II.

A vast plateau, fourteen leagues in length and five across, which extends through the centre of the western half of the Balkan Peninsula and is intersected by little hills and hillocks, and surrounded on all sides by lofty mountains, is the *Kossovo Plain*, or, more simply, *Kossovo*. In order to reach it, it is necessary to descend through narrow passes, down which flow turbulent rivers. Over these passes both nations and armies crossed for centuries, on their way between the south-east and the north-west of the Balkan Peninsula. Therefore Kossovo has been often a field of blood, and the "bloody Sitnitza" river in the national songs has deserved its *epiteton ornans*. It saw a battle in 1073 between the Serbs and the Byzantines with the Bulgar Allies. One hundred years later, Stephen Nemanya defeated his brothers on Kossovo, thus establishing his own independence and paving the way to Serbian Empire. Later, in 1403, there was a battle on Kossovo Plain between the Serbian despot Stephen Lazarevitch

and the Turkish Sultan Mussa ; in 1448 one between the Hungarian army under Jovan Hunyady and the Turks, and in 1689 one between the Austrians under Piccolomini and the Turks. The 19th century witnessed an encounter between some of the Bosnian insurgent Begs (Beys) and the Turks, and the first stronger attacks of the first Balkan War in 1912 were delivered at Mrdare—on the gates of Kossovo. But of all the battles on Kossovo Plain the most important is that which took place on Vidov-Dan (St. Vitus' Day), June 15th, O.S., 1389, between the Turks and the Serbian allied armies. That is the battle for which Kossovo is known to the world, and the one of which men think when Kossovo is mentioned.

As to the details of the actual fighting of Kossovo in 1389, historical sources disagree, and it is rather difficult to give an approximately correct and vivid description of it. But what is proved beyond doubt is that Sultan Murat's armies numbered no less than 80,000 men—a large number for those days. Composed of cavalry, infantry, and bowmen, their military organisation was perfect, their equipment complete and their discipline iron. In addition to this the force of Mussulman fanaticism and the prospect of rich booty, gave great impulse to the Turkish troops. The command was in the hands of able and experienced warriors, devoted unconditionally to the Sultan in whom all had entire confidence. Thirty years of brilliant and successful warfare in Asia and Europe sufficed to build up his great military reputation. Sultan Murat entered the Plain of Kossovo with his armies, taking southern positions as far as Prishtina, once the royal seat of the Nemanyas.—The combined allied armies of Prince Lazar, Vuk Brankovitch, George Balshitch, and King Tvrtko, who opposed the Sultan, did not amount to more than half the number of the Turks. The Serbian army was composed mainly of cavalry and infantry, with but few archers. They were also well equipped, nor were they ill disciplined, or without enthusiasm. On the contrary, the conflict being waged in defence of Christianity and independence, the Serbian soldiers brought all their courage to the fight. The Turkish chroniclers relate that the Serbian army was in good spirits before the battle; the soldiers sang songs in praise of their nation's heroism. There, too, the command was in the hands of tried warriors, who had won their experiences in the constant fighting of those days. The Turks, however, had a great advantage, their command being in a single hand—that of the Sultan—whilst the Serbs had an army composed of allies without a supreme authority.

The Serbs took up the northern positions on the Kossovo Plain opposite to the Turks.

The fighting began on the morning of St. Vitus' Day, Tuesday, the 15th June, 1389. Both sides were fully conscious that it was a struggle for very existence, and enormous numbers were wounded and slain. In regard to the huge number of casualties on Kossovo, the traditions of the Serbian ballads agree very closely with the written records. The Turkish historian Nesri says that " blood was shed " ; there were " mountains of slain," that " heads fell to the ground like pebbles." At first fortune favoured the Serbs. The Turkish left wing was repulsed, and the Serbian army almost came into touch with the flank of the Turkish centre. A brave Serbian captain, by the name of Milosh Obilitch, who, owing to intrigue had fallen under Lazar's displeasure, anxious to prove his loyalty, cut his way through the Turks and slew the Sultan with his own hand. The Serbian national songs, in celebrating the deed of Milosh, add that he slew many other Turks besides. But at the most critical moment of the battle, the young Sultan Bajazid advanced the right wing to the aid of the left with fresh reserves, and, attacking the Serbian right, rolled it back over the river Sitnitza, and threw the Serbs into disorder. Prince Lazar, who was personally taking part in the fighting, fell from his horse into a pit ; the Serbs lost sight of him in the confusion of the fighting, the Turks came up, took him prisoner and led him away. Several other Serbian leaders were also captured.

By the afternoon fighting was at an end. The Serbian army had been cut to pieces. Prince Lazar and the other captive princes were beheaded on the spot. Kossovo became the grave of Serbian freedom.

Prince Lazar's body was laid to rest in the monastery of Gratchanitza, on Kossovo. From thence his remains were transferred to the monastery of Ravanitza, which had been built out of Lazar's private fortune. The Serbian Church has canonised Prince Lazar, and the day of his death, 15th June, O.S., is observed in his honour every year. The Serbian literature from the Middle Ages till this very day, and the Serbian people—from the ruling dynasties to the poor peasants and illiterate monks—have heaped praise and gratitude upon Prince Lazar. The common people worship at his tomb, as pilgrims worship at the Holy Sepulchre. When the Serbian people abandoned the home of their fathers in search of safety from the Turks, the Serbian monks, with other relics, bore away the remains of Prince Lazar and interred them in the monastery at Vrdnik in the Frushka Gora in Syrmium, which was then renamed Nova Ravanitza

(New Ravanitza). Year after year the Serbs of South Hungary gather in crowds in Ravanitza on the anniversary of Lazar's death to worship at the shrine of St. Lazar, and to kiss reverently the relics of the Prince who died for Serbia's freedom. There is hardly any Serb in Austria and Hungary who has not kissed his hand, so strongly alive is the tradition of the Kossovo disaster there.

\* \* \* \* \*

The traveller of to-day, after a lapse of over five hundred years, passing through Kossovo Plain, can hear the living traditions of the great St. Vitus' Day from the inhabitants themselves. They will show him many tombstones with turbans carved upon them and tell him that these stones mark the graves of the Turks who fell in the battle of Kossovo, and they will point out many plain tombstones under which Serbs lie buried. On one hill they will show him a cairn containing two graves, which are guarded by a dervish, who tells that these are the graves of Gazi-Sinan the Grand Vizier and his servant who perished at the hand of Milosh Obilitch. About the cairn are thousands of Turkish graves and they say that Milosh slew all these men as well. A little further on there is a Turkish shrine (Tolbe) which marks the spot where Murat perished. Around this spot the fight raged most fiercely. Popular tradition goes even further and attaches special memories of Kossovo battle to every place. Every river, every town and village on the Plain and on the mountains encircling it, each has its own tradition. Even the red peony, that grows luxuriantly on Kossovo, is said to owe its crimson hue to the blood of the Serbian soldiers who fell there.

The battle of Kossovo has set its sign upon the Serbian nation. Among the whole of the Serbian nation it is considered unlucky to start anything on a Tuesday, because the battle of Kossovo fell on a Tuesday. The reason for every ordinary mishap is sought in the disaster of Kossovo. "Things are hard for us, hard since Kossovo," is an exclamation you may hear whenever a misfortune of any kind occurs. To this day the women of Montenegro and Herzegovina wail for Kossovo as they do after a death, instead of singing of it. When an amazed scholar on his travels asked them who had died, he was told: "Nobody has died; but we wail for Lazar and Milosh who fell at Kossovo."

### III.

The dire consequences of the battle of Kossovo were not all apparent immediately after the battle. In the actual fighting both Serbs and Turks had sustained great losses. Both the chief generals had perished. Immediately after the battle the new Sultan Bajazid withdrew to Adrianople, there to assume the Royal State in accordance with Turkish custom. King Tvrtko of Bosnia, whose army took part in the battle of Kossovo, was under the impression that the Serbs had been victorious, and spread reports to this effect in the countries of Western Europe. Meantime, it soon became evident how matters truly stood. Turkey had increased in size and strength. The Turkish throne was occupied by an enterprising and capable Sultan, supported by a powerful army and devoted generals. In Serbia everything was different. The alliance of the Serbian rulers was annihilated at Kossovo. Prince Lazar's country, the most important factor against the Turks, was left without a head. The Government of Serbia was undertaken by Lazar's widow, Princess Militza, as Regent for her youthful son; she was an able woman, and pious, but too weak for the desperate position of Serbia at that juncture. She was compelled, not only to continue the struggle against the Turks, but also to fight the smaller Serbian principalities who were trying to be beforehand with the Turks in enlarging their own power at the expense of Lazar's territory. The struggle against the Turks on the one hand and the Serbian smaller States on the other gradually exhausted the strength of the Serbian nation. The attempts made by the rest of Europe to check the Turkish advance came late and were insufficient. The Serbian States, though they continued the struggle, were powerless to resist and fell one by one into the hands of the Turks. Serbia as a whole fell in 1459, Bosnia in 1463, Herzegovina in 1482, Montenegro nominally in 1499. Of Serbia's great past and her heroic struggle for existence, nothing remained but a glorious memory.

By the battle of Kossovo more was lost than the independence of the Serbian countries. Its consequences were much further reaching. By the defeat of the Serbs, the gate of Central Europe was open to the Turks and to all the ravages they committed.

TIH. R. GJORGJEVITCH.

## SERBIA'S GREATEST BATTLE.

*By Sir Arthur Evans.*

Historically the battle of Kossovo was essentially a drawn battle. Nay, in many respects the balance seemed to incline to the Christian side. If one of the Confederate Princes, Knez Lazar, of Danubian Serbia, met his death, the Turks lost, in their Sultan Amurath, the head of their whole empire. The Turkish host, under the new Sultan Bajazet, withdrew to Adrianople. The most valuable prizes that in case of victory might have fallen into Turkish hands were left in Serbian possession.

The thriving towns of Novobrdo, in the very neighbourhood of Kossovo, and Kratovo, nearer to the Macedonian border—the centres of the important silver-mining industry—remained untouched. No attempt was made to occupy the Imperial cities of Prisrend and Skoplje. It was not without reason that the commander of the Bosnian and Primorian contingent, Vlatko Hranitch, who drew off his own forces from the field in good order, sent tidings of victory to his master, King Tvrtko, passed on by him to the citizens of Traù and Florence. In the Cathedral of Notre Dame *Te Deums* of thanksgiving for the success of the Christian arms were actually celebrated in the presence of the King of France.

Contemporaries were impressed by the great forces engaged—the Turks actually magnified the Christian hosts to half a million men! The dramatic incidents of the battle inspired poetic commemoration among the Turks as well as the Serbs. "The Turkish histories," as the English historian, Richard Knolles, records, "to express the day, vainly say that the angels in Heaven, amazed with that hideous noise, for that time forgot the heavenly hymns wherewith they alwaies glorify God." It is possible, indeed, that for the first time in Balkan war cannon may have contributed to the din of battle, since the Venetians had shortly before presented a "falconus" to the King of Bosnia.

## LAST UNITED EFFORT OF THE SERBS.

Thus the first impression of the fight was that of an heroic combat between equals. The bards who carried on the Court poetry that had already existed in the days of Tzar Dushan and earlier kings, dramatized the incidents of the battle without any particular reference to historic consequences. It was only the later realization of its far-reaching effects that made the Lay of Kossovo an epic record of what proved to have been the last united effort of the Serbian race to resist the Asiatic invader. It was itself an inheritance from days when the spirit of the Serb people as a whole was still unbroken, and it was from this quality indeed that it drew its inspiration in the dark days that were to come.

In reality the apparently even fortunes of the opposing hosts—the superficial point that impressed contemporaries—were profoundly misleading. The Serbian Prince Lazar was only one of several Confederate champions, the most important of whom, at least, the Bosnian King, would hardly have recognized him as even *primus inter pares*. The combination of so many Christian forces was itself a mighty effort. But even the most decisive victory could have hardly given a permanent value to what in reality was a loosely compacted alliance of princes and chieftains standing in various feudal relations of different races and of opposing creeds, and scattered over a physically divided geographical area extending from North Macedonia to the Danube and the Adriatic.

On the other hand, the fall of Amurath did not seriously affect the centralized Ottoman organization. The "lightning" Bajazet flashed at once into his father's place. The Serbs, too, it should be remembered, had barely recovered from the terrible slaughter on the banks of the Maritza some 25 years earlier. Lazar himself had already suffered the loss of Nish, and had been reduced to the position of a tributary and dependent. From their European capital of Adrianople the Turks already dominated most of the eastern half of the Peninsula. They were astride of the Balkans, and had subjugated Danubian Bulgaria, while, on the other side, the possession of Seres was a threat to Salonika itself.

## LOOSENESS OF THE CHRISTIAN ALLIANCE.

Apart from the particularist tendencies of the great feudatories and the personal jealousies of which we have the echo in the legendary treason of Vuk Brankovitch on the field of Kossovo itself, it is hard to discover any firm

elements of cohesion among the various units represented in the great alliance. Islam was a reality; Christendom less than a name. What real sympathy is it possible to detect between the militant Catholicism of Hungary and its Bosnian vassals and the Orthodox Serbian princes?

The seeds of still worse discord lay in Bosnia itself, where the Catholic persecution of the puritan and quasi-Manichæan Bogomili was to bear fruit in the wholesale conversion of the latter to Mahomedanism. Regional interests and religious jealousies were thus for over five centuries to rivet the bondage of the Serbian people and to bar the way to any political union between the kindred members of the South Slav race.

But, through all this, the epic Lay of Kossovo, sung from generation to generation by peasant bards to the strains of the one-stringed guzla in the remotest mountain glens and the busiest market-places, has still been a common heirloom of the whole people. It has perpetuated the tradition of national unity and kept green the memory of heroic deeds. It held up withal the traitors of the past to lasting obloquy. The lesson brought home by it is one which all members of the South Slav race take to heart to-day. It is summed up in the Serbian motto, "*Samo Sloga Srbina Spasava*"—"Union only saves the Serbs."

(*"Times" on Kossovo Day, June 28th, 1916.*)

# THE EPIC LAY OF KOSSOVO.

## Three Serbian Ballads.

" There resteth to Serbia a glory,  
" A glory that shall not grow old ;  
" There remaineth to Serbia a story,  
" A tale to be chanted and told !  
" They are gone to their graves grim and gory  
" The beautiful, brave, and bold ;  
" But out of the darkness and desolation  
" Of the mourning heart of a widow'd nation,  
" Their memory waketh an exultation !  
" Yea, so long as a babe shall be born,  
" Or there resteth a man in the land—  
" So long as a blade of corn  
" Shall be reap'd by a human hand—  
" So long as the grass shall grow  
" On the mighty plain of Kossovo—  
" So long, so long, even so,  
" Shall the glory of those remain  
" Who this day in battle were slain."

—Translated by OWEN MEREDITH.

## THE BATTLE OF KOSSOVO.

Murad camped on the Field of Blackbirds,  
And then a letter did he write,  
And to the fortress of Krushevatz sent it :—  
“ To the knees of Lazar, Prince of the Serbs !  
“ O Prince Lazar, Head of this land,  
“ It never was known, and it never can be,  
“ That in one Empire two should rule,  
“ And that the lieges should doubly be taxed.  
“ We cannot both of us bear the sceptre.  
“ Send to *me* then the keys and the taxes.  
“ The golden keys of each strong place,  
“ And the taxes for seven years.  
“ And shouldst thou decline to send them me,  
“ Then let us meet on the Field of Blackbirds  
“ And with our sabres divide the Empire.”

When Tsar Lazar received this letter,  
He read it through and bitterly wept.  
Oh if some one could but have listened,  
To hear the deep curses of the prince.  
“ He who does not come to the Field of Blackbirds,  
“ Let nothing prosper in his hands,  
“ Neither the gold-white wheat in the field,  
“ Nor the vine on the mountain side,  
“ Nor the children playing at home.”

Then Tsar Lazar kept his nameday  
In the silent fortress of Krushevatz.  
At his rich table he seated his guests,  
All his lords and noble courtiers.  
On the right sat the old Jug Bogdan,  
At his side the nine Jugovitch brothers ;  
Vuk Brankovitch on his left,  
And the other lords in their due order.  
But facing him was Milosh seated,  
And beside him two Serbian Voivodes—  
Ivan Kossantchitch was the one,  
And the other was Milan Toplitza.

The Tsar lifted the brimming goblet,  
And thus he spake to his noble guests :—  
“ To whom shall I quaff the brimming beaker ?  
“ If it be age that should decide,  
“ Then I must pledge the old Jug Bogdan.  
“ If it be rank that should decide it,  
“ Then I must drink to Vuk Brankovitch.  
“ If I may follow the voice of feeling,  
“ Then the cup falls to my wife’s dear brothers,  
“ To my wife’s brothers, the nine Jugovitch.  
“ Should manly beauty prescribe my choice,  
“ Then the cup is the prize of Kossantchitch,  
“ And if *height* is to decide,  
“ Then the cup is Milan Toplitza’s.  
“ But if hero’s prowess decides my choice,  
“ Then I drain it to Milosh the Voivode :  
“ To no other may it be pledged.  
“ To the health of Milosh Obilitch !  
“ Thy health, O Milosh, loyal and false—  
“ First loyal to me—and at last to me false.  
“ To-morrow thou wilt in battle betray me,  
“ Wilt pass over to Murad’s army.  
“ Thy health, O Milosh, and drain the beaker :  
“ Drink, and keep it as a gift.”

Up to his feet sprang Milosh Obilitch,  
Then to the black earth down he bowed.  
“ Thanks to thee, most gracious Tsar Lazar,  
“ My heartfelt thanks to thee for thy toast ;  
“ For thy toast and for thy present ;  
“ But no thanks for such a speech !  
“ For—else may my faith undo me—  
“ Never unfaithful have I been,  
“ Ne’er have I been, and ne’er shall be.  
“ But I am resolved on the field to-morrow  
“ For the faith of Christ to give my life.  
“ But faithless sits at thy very knee  
“ And drinks the wine from his silk-draped glass,  
“ He, the accursed, the traitor Brankovitch.  
“ On the sacred Vitus-Day to-morrow  
“ We shall see on the Field of Blackbirds,  
“ Who is faithful and who is faithless.  
“ But by God the Almighty I swear it—  
“ To-morrow I’ll go to the Field of Blackbirds,  
“ And there I shall kill the Sultan Murad,  
“ And plant my foot upon his throat.

"Should God and fortune grant to me  
"My safe return to Krushevatz,  
"Vuk Brankovitch shall be my captive,  
"And to my warlance I shall bind him,  
"As a woman the flax to her apron,  
"And shall drag him thus to the Field of Blackbirds."

*(Translated by R. W. SETON-WATSON.)*

### THE MOTHER OF THE JUGOVITCH.

Dear God, how great a marvel !  
When the army camped on the field of Kossovo,  
And in that army nine Jugovitch brothers,  
And the tenth, the old Jug Bogdan.  
The mother of the Jugovitch prays to God,  
That He may give her the eyes of a falcon  
And the white wings of a swan,  
That she may fly to the Plain of Kossovo  
And may see the nine Jugovitch brothers,  
And the tenth, the old Jug Bogdan.

As she prayed, her prayer was granted,  
God gave her the eyes of a falcon  
And the white wings of a swan.  
Then she flies to the Plain of Kossovo.  
Dead she found the nine Jugovitch brothers,  
And the tenth, the old Jug Bogdan.  
And above them, nine spears of battle;  
Perched on the spears, falcons nine ;  
Around the spears, nine good steeds ;  
And beside them nine grim lions.  
Then did they whinny, the nine good steeds ;  
Then did they roar, the nine grim lions ;  
Then did they scream, the nine falcons.  
E'en then the mother was hard of heart,  
And from her heart no tear did rise.

But she takes the nine good steeds,  
And she takes the nine grim lions,  
And she takes the nine falcons.

Back she turns to her castle white.  
From afar her sons' wives saw her :  
A little nearer they came to meet her.  
There was clamour of nine widows :  
There was weeping of nine orphans :  
There was neighing of nine good steeds :  
There was roaring of nine grim lions :  
There was screaming of nine falcons.  
E'en then the mother was hard of heart,  
And from her heart no tear did rise.

When night was come, and the midnight was there,  
Then the grey horse of Damian groaned.  
And Damian's mother asked his wife :  
" Daughter of mine and wife of Damian,  
" What sets the horse of Damian groaning ?  
" Can it be hunger for pure white corn ?  
" Can it be thirst for water of Zvetchan ? "  
Then answered the wife of Damian :  
" It is not hunger for pure white corn :  
" It is not thirst for water of Zvetchan.  
" It is, that Damian had taught him,  
" Till midnight, to feast on hay,  
" And after midnight, to take the road.  
" Now 'tis his master he is mourning,  
" For he will never bear him more."  
E'en then the mother was hard of heart,  
And from her heart no tear did rise.

When morning came and break of dawn,  
There came flying two coal-black ravens.  
Bloody were their wings up to the shoulders.  
Round their beaks there clung white foam.  
And they carried the hand of a hero,  
And on the hand a wedding-ring of gold.  
They threw it into the mother's lap.

The mother of the Jugovitch took the hand,  
She turned it round, she fondled it,  
And then she called the wife of Damian.  
" Daughter of mine and wife of Damian,  
" Couldst thou tell whose hand is this ? "  
Then answered the wife of Damian :  
" Mother of mine, O mother of Damian,

" This is the hand of our own Damian,  
" For I do know the ring, my mother ;  
" At the betrothal I did have it."  
The mother took the hand of Damian,  
She turned it round, she fondled it.  
Then to the hand she softly spake :  
" O my hand, my fresh green apple,  
" Where didst thou grow, where wert thou plucked ?  
" 'Twas on my bosom thou didst grow.  
" The plucking, 'twas on Kossovo's plain."  
Speaking, she breathed her soul away.

*(Translated by R. W. SETON-WATSON.)*

## THE MAIDEN OF KOSSOVO.

*(After the Battle.)*

The maiden of Kossovo rose early  
On the Sabbath morn, sooner than sunrise ;  
From her round arms she turned back the white sleeves,  
Turned them backward above the white elbows.  
On her shoulders a bag was with white bread—  
And in her hands were two golden vessels ;  
One vessel was fresh filled with cool water,  
The other to the brim was with red wine.

She went straight to the Plain of Kossovo  
And sadly walked over the battlefield  
Where the glorious Tzar Lazar had fallen.  
In the blood-pools she turned round the heroes,  
And if she found still one of them breathing  
She bathed him gently with clear cold water ;  
As sacrament she gave him the red wine,  
And fed him with small crumbs of the white bread.

In her wanderings she came, God guided,  
To the brave young knight, Orlovitch Pavlo :  
He who carried the Tzar Lazar's standard.  
She found him yet alive, and still conscious,  
Though the right arm was slash'd from the shoulder,  
And the left leg cut off from the knee-joint—  
Yet alive, though his ribs all were broken,  
And his lungs were laid bare to the daylight !

She drew him forth from a blood-lake,  
She bathed him softly with clear, cold water ;  
Then she gave him to drink of the red wine,  
And fed him with small crumbs of the white bread.

When his heart beatings grew somewhat stronger,  
Said brave Orlovitch faint to the maiden :

“ My sister, thou, maiden of Kossovo,  
“ Tell me what is the dire need which drives thee  
“ To move brave men in midst of their life-blood ?  
“ Whom seekest thou, so young, in this red field ?  
“ A brother ? Or the son of a brother ?  
“ Or is it thy old father thou seekest ? ”

Then the maiden of Kossovo answered :

“ Dear brother ! dear thou art though a stranger,  
“ I am seeking here none of my kindred ;  
“ Neither brother nor son of a brother—  
“ I seek not even my own old father !  
“ To thee it must be known, O strange Vojvode,  
“ When all the Tzar’s men took communion  
“ In the beautiful church Samodreja,  
“ The whole army took there communion.

“ Last of all came three valiant Vojvodes,  
“ Obilitch Milosh, Kossantchitch Ivan,  
“ And the third one, Milan of Toplitza.  
“ Three noble Vojvodes ! three of the noblest !  
“ They never had their equals in this world !  
“ When they walk’d their swords rung on the pavement,  
“ On their heads they wore kalpaks of pure silk,  
“ Round their shoulders hung long chains of gold links,  
“ On their necks they wore kerchiefs of silk cloth ;  
“ They wore also gold rings on their fingers.

“ When the Obilitch Milosh passed by me,  
“ He gave me for a present his gold chain ;  
“ When the Kossantchitch Ivan passed by me,  
“ He gave me for a present his gold ring ;  
“ But when Milan of Toplitza passed by,  
“ He gave to me his fine glove of gold thread ;  
“ And he marked me thereby for his true love.  
“ These seek I to-day on the battlefield.”

Said again to her Orlovitch Pavlo :

“ My dear sister, maiden of Kossovo,

“ Dost thou not see there those broken war spears ?

“ The last life-blood of heroes has flowed there !

“ Flowed high up as the stirrups of war steeds !

“ It has reached to the belts of the footmen !

“ It is *there* thy three heroes have fallen !

“ But go back to thy white house, my sister !

“ Stain not thus thy white skirts and thy white sleeves.”

When the maiden of Kossovo heard him,

The great tears fell fast over her white cheeks.

She went back to the house of her father ;

Wildly weeping she went back, and wailing,

“ Woe to me ! What ill-luck has befallen me !

“ Oh, were I but to touch the green pine tree,

“ The green tree at my sad touch would wither.”

(*Translated by E. L. MIJATOVITCH.*)

## KOSSOVO DAY HEROES

**whose memory will never fade.**

*By Alice and Claude Askew.*

Salonica.

Serbia is once more a conquered nation but she keeps the anniversary of Kossovo (June 28th) all the same. It has been observed religiously for more than 500 years. Her women and children will mourn for the dead cavaliers who fell in glorious conflict on the green plain, fighting the infidel Turks, and her army waiting round and about Salonica will remember the great Czar Lazar and the hero Milosh Obilitch.

The dress that the peasant women wear all over Serbia, the long, straight, white robe, heavily embroidered with black wool round the hem and sleeves, is worn as mourning for the mighty captains who perished on the historic battlefield that, to quote from a Turkish chronicler, "became like a tulip bed, with its ruddy severed heads and rolling turbans," for the Serbians will never forget how bravely Lazar and his cavaliers fought till they fell. They are proud of the glorious dead. They talk of the great battle as if it had taken place yesterday instead of five centuries ago. In their own poetical language they will describe how the bright armour that the Serbians wore gleamed like the lightning when the cavaliers charged, and how the blades of the Turkish sabres—those blades that had flashed like diamonds at the start of the combat, became as red as hyacinths as the day wore on—the day that heralded in Serbia's long night of servitude and oppression.

The ballads that have helped so wonderfully to maintain the patriotism and the courage of the Serbs, those ballads that the mothers of Serbia have sung to their sons as they nursed them, are full of references to Kossovo.

We learn how the mother of the Jugovitch prayed to God that He would give her the eyes of a falcon and the white wings of a swan that she might fly to the plain of Kossovo and see how it fared with her nine sons. Her prayer was granted, but she found her sons dead. Her heart did not break till next day, however, when at dawn two coal-black ravens brought her on their beaks the clay-cold hand of her son Damian. The mother fondled the hand for some little time, then she softly spake before she died :—

“ O, my hand, my fresh green apple—  
Where didst thou grow, where wert thou plucked ?  
'Twas on my bosom thou didst grow.  
The plucking, 'twas on Kossovo's plain.”

Another ballad relates how the maid of Kossovo went seeking her lover, Milan of Toplitza, who had given her his fine glove of gold thread and marked her thereby for his true love, but where Milan lay the blood had flowed so deep that the crimson tide reached to the very stirrups of the war steeds. Wailing bitterly, the fair maid of Kossovo returned to her father's house, crying out in her anguish that were she but to touch a green pine tree it would wither.

The day of Serbia's freedom came round, however. The slavery of the Turkish yoke was powerless to crush a nation which never ceased to remember their country's past glories, a nation which had the courage to keep the fatal anniversary of Kossovo as a festival day during the cruel years of bondage, convinced that the freedom they so ardently desired was bound to come. And, true enough, the last shackles of the Turkish chain were severed when the Serbian crusade against Islam finished under King Peter in 1912, and Serbia rose up proud and triumphant, once more the shining tower of the east, anxious only to dwell in peace.

But this was not to be. War was forced on her, and then, after four years of hard fighting, she was beset at the same time by Germans, Magyars, and Bulgars, and only the flight into exile saved her army—that terrible famine retreat which has cost such a heavy toll of lives.

We remember approaching the plain of Kossovo during the early part of the retreat, riding slowly with the army. The air seemed to beat and quiver to the tramp of soldiers' feet. The men hardly spoke ; they kept a heavy silence as they marched, a tragic silence.

“ If only the dead could rise ! Ah, if only our dead heroes could rise from their graves on this plain and lead us back into battle ! Lazar, Milosh Obilitch, Kosanchich Ivan, why do you slumber ? Is Serbia to be lost a second time ? ”

An officer riding with us rose up suddenly in his stirrups and addressed the flowing plains. He spoke out of the bitterness of his heart, aware that what he asked was not to be—at least, so it seemed at the time, but now we are not so certain, for who knows if the Serbian heroes of to-day may not be inspired by the spirits of the mighty dead ?

Kossovo Day—they keep it, the pale, weeping women and children in pillaged and ravaged Serbia. Starving mothers are whispering to their hungry babes that a conquering army will come to their help before long, that they will not be allowed to perish.

Kossovo Day—can you picture it at Salonica, where the Serbian troops wait with their loins girded and the hunger of the exile in their eyes ?—remembering the cavaliers who perished on the plain of Kossovo, and remembering the men who have fallen during the present war, the Serbs on whose shoulders the mantle of Lazar descended, of Lazar and his knights, the red robe of martyrdom.

Hail to Kossovo Day, for it will be followed by the day of victory ! The day when Serbia will leap up from the dust and, binding her torn locks about her forehead, will once more resume her crown, and twisted in and out that shining circlet will be the fadeless laurel leaves that the living and the dead have won for her on the field of honour.

(“ *Daily Express* ” on Kossovo Day, 1916.)

## THE THING CALLED A NATION.

### The Spiritual Issue of the War.

*By G. K. Chesterton.*

Five hundred years ago our Allies the Serbians went down in the great Battle of Kossovo, which was the end of their triumph and the beginning of their glory. For if the Serbian Empire was mortally wounded, the Serbian nation had a chance to prove itself immortal; since it is only in death that we can discover immortality. So awfully alive is that Christian thing called a nation that its very death is a living death. It is a living death which lasts a hundred times longer than any life of man; and of what it meant to the Serbians I know of no possible literary expression. The nearest words for it are found, I believe, in a Serbian proverb, which I fancy I have heard, and which I am sure is too good for me to have imagined: "God never made a heaven until He saw the sorrows of the Serbs."

\* \* \* \* \*

The day of the great Turkish victory is everywhere celebrated by Serbians—except in Serbia. To ask why it cannot be kept in Serbia is to ask the central question about the greatest quarrel that has ever convulsed this planet. Of its momentousness in the matter of Serbia as a nation I will say something in a moment. But if we wished to state the spiritual issue of the whole war in its simplest and strongest terms I do not think we could find a better definition than this one. We are fighting to preserve that particular spirit which remembers a defeat rather than a victory. We are fighting to make Success a failure. The Germans keep the Day of Sedan, that is the Day of Success; and it is a fact, to which any honest observer will attest, that they are conspicuous among other nations recalling other victories, by the fact that their whole phraseology and philosophy treats it as a part of an inevitable success, of an interminable Sedan. The Prussians

do not remember and celebrate the Day of Jena. That is why it is vitally necessary, even for their own sakes, to give them a bigger Jena, which they will be obliged to remember. As it is, the average Prussian probably realises nothing about Jena except that Professor Haeckel lives there ; which may indeed be reasonably regarded as a national judgment or visitation in itself ; but in which the divine irony expresses itself in too subtle a manner to be easily apprehended by the Prussian mind. We must be content to tell the Prussian, well knowing that he will not understand us, that we are fighting to give him a Kossovo Day to make a man of him, that he may some day be as civilised as a Serbian peasant.

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Kossovo of the Serbians towers in history as the most tragic and memorable of such instances of memory. But it is by no means the only instance indicating that the Allies stand for this paradox of the undefeated defeat. When I first went to Paris as a mere boy I think the thing that most struck my eye and stuck in my memory was that sculptured circle of the great cities of France, in which the only statue still girt with new garlands and draperies is the lost city of Strasburg. It seemed to be a challenge to the changes of time more momentous and impressive even than the cannon column of Napoleon or the towers of Notre Dame. The whole flood of our thoughts which were then full of a German fatalism ran clean contrary to that challenge ; so much so that I remember a phrase in some standard English work expressing not only wonder but a sort of amusement at the thing, as if it were an impish variety of the well-known French vanity. " Other nations celebrate their victories," wrote this simple and laborious man. " Who but the French would celebrate even their defeats ? " Even then, I am glad to say, I had glimpses of a somewhat manlier moral philosophy, and I never saw a sight in my life that impelled me so spontaneously to say, *In hoc signo vinces*. But the very phrase I am using is enough to remind me that the idea is older and even more historic than the just quarrel of France. In the light of that ancient idea, most assuredly, Serbia must be called the eldest brother of the Alliance. It was under the sign by which Constantine conquered that Lazar fell in a failure that has been as fruitful as a martyrdom. And that sign, which Constantine saw in heaven above his eagles, should be enough in itself to convey that mystery of Christendom which must always be a menace to its enemies, and above

all to the Prussian, its last and its most insolent enemy. There is but one religion which can only decorate even its triumphs with an emblem of defeat. There is only one army which carries the image of its own captain, not enthroned or riding, but captured and impaled.

\* \* \* \* \*

The sort of cosmopolitan expert who tests everything by the philosophy of a courier, a man to whose globe-trotting cynicism we have paid far more attention than his shallow experiences deserve, will often tell us that he can see little difference between Turk and Christian in the wilds of South Eastern Europe; he thinks they are much of a muchness, because they may both wear knives or what is worse, indulge in religious observances. This is the true type of man who would have been a blind and barren spectator of any one of the great and crucial disputes of history. He would have regarded Cicero and Julius Caesar as two Roman senators in togas having a tiff: he would have been fully satisfied with the fact that Foulon and Robespierre both powdered their hair, when he had got over the real interesting discovery that they both spoke French. The philosophy of facts always escapes him; and we cannot select or even see facts except by a philosophy. It is in the very fundamentals of human philosophy that the Eastern Christians, headed by the heroic and unhappy Serbs, differ from that Asiatic Empire which has ruled or rather robbed them. It is an ultimate question which divides this nation which is no longer an Empire from that Empire which has never been a nation.

\* \* \* \* \*

And the chief fruit of this philosophy is the national idea itself, the sacramental sense of boundary, the basis in an almost religious sense of agriculture, the idea of having a home upon this earth, which the Arab armies out of the deserts can hardly even be said to have violated, having never even begun to understand. If we in the West have enjoyed these things more pacifically than the Serbians it would be on the last level of vileness for us to reproach them with the difference. For in the plain light of history, it is because they have been warlike that we have found it possible to be peaceful. If they are fierce it is because no courage short of sheer fanaticism could have kept the frontiers of Christendom against such locust-clouds of foes, while we were electing our first Parliaments and building

our first cathedrals. While all we call the world was being made they were the wall of the world. If they had the faults of such fighting we at least might in decency regard them not as sins, but scars. If, as the courier informs us, they carry knives, it is because they know, as we shall probably never know, what we really mean when we talk of war to the knife. If they have wildly struck down tyrants who were also traitors, it is because for them a phrase like "selling the pass" is not a petty political metaphor, but has often referred to a real pass, over real mountains, letting loose ruin upon real villages in a real valley.

And, indeed, it is this vivid and sensitive visualisation of the traitor which makes the main sentiment of Serbia in the war. The Serbs have a feeling about the part played by Austria which we in the West can but imperfectly understand. That Austria was wholly and flatly in the wrong in the quarrel that created this war is admitted by everyone in his five wits. It may even be said that it was admitted by Austria, since she refused arbitration or even any sort of discussion. It is admitted by many of the Germans, who are, indeed, more and more disposed to prove their own impeccable virtue at the expense of the Austrians, as well as of all the rest of mankind. But the Serbian has an issue with the Austrian which is the more sinister for being spiritual. For the Serb the Austrian is a Christian—like Judas Iscariot. He is a Christian who has stabbed him in the back while he was still fighting with his face to the infidel. And his just anger is full of the fury of five centuries, and dark with the trappings of that day of mourning when the blood of his saints and heroes was given on the field of blackbirds in vain.

(*"The Daily News" on Kossovo Day, 1916.*)

“**FOR SERBIA—‘KOSSOVO DAY,’**—JUNE 28th, 1389-1916,” was issued by the “Kossovo Day” Committee, and distributed in 85,000 copies. In addition, the Committee published the following series of pamphlets for Kossovo Day, 1916 :—

1. **Kossovo Day, 1389-1916** (with a decorative design of Tzar Lazar *by* Mr. Radovani), *ed. by* Father Nicolas Velimirović.
2. **Serbia and Kossovo**, *by* Dr. T. R. Gjordjević.
3. **Notes on Serbian History**, for lecturers. (*Dr. Ćurčin.*)
4. **Serbian Ballads**, *translated by* R. W. Seton-Watson.
5. **Heroic Serbia**, *from the French of* Victor Bérard.
6. **Serbia: Yesterday, To-day and Tomorrow**, *by* R. W. Seton-Watson. (25,000 copies for schools.)
7. **Serbia's War of Liberation**, *by* R. W. Seton-Watson. (50,000 copies.)
8. **The Women of Serbia**, *by* Fanny S. Copeland, *with a Preface by* Lady Paget.
9. **Without Home and Country**, *by a* Serbian Poet.
10. **Kossovo Day (1399-1916)**. Report and two lectures, *published by the* Kossovo Day Committee.

Besides 30,000 copies of the Serbian National Anthem, with English words, were printed and distributed, and numerous post card reproductions of Mr. Bernard Partridge's cartoon “Heroic Serbia,” from “Punch,” and of the picture of Tzar Lazar.



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